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AN ANCIENT GAME OF COURTSHIP FROM NORTH CAROLINA.

THE following song is contributed by Mrs. E. M. Backus, as remembered by grandmothers in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. The recorder remarks that no herders of swine have been known in the State:—

“Swine-herders, swine-herders, swine-herders we are,
A-courtin’ your daughter so neat and so fair,
Can we get lodgings here, O here,
Can we get lodgings here?”

“Swine-herders, swine-herders, swine-herders ye are,
A-courtin’ my daughter so neat and so fair,
And ye can’t get lodgings here, O here,
And ye can’t get lodgings here.”

“You have a fair daughter, you’re ugly yourself,
We’ll travel on farther and seek better wealth,
And we don’t want lodgings here, O here,
And we don’t want lodgings here.”

“I have a fair daughter, she sits by my knee,
And some young man can get her from me,
And he can get lodgings here, O here,
And he can get lodgings here.”

The verses belong to a very ancient game of European diffusion and manifold variations, the idea of which consists in the dramatization of an offer of marriage, as presented by ambassadors who demand a wife on the part of their master, and who at first make small offers, or assume a mean disguise, but gradually augment their promises, and allow their true rank to become known. A variant of the present rhyme is found in the West Virginian game of “Three Kings” (“Games and Songs of American Children,” No. 2):—

“Here come three soldiers three by three,
To court your daughter merrily;
Can we have a lodging, can we have a lodging,
Can we have a lodging here to-night?”

The lodging is refused, until the suitors reveal themselves as kings, and such must have been the sequence of the game in North Carolina. The manner of playing was no doubt by the row of suitors alternately advancing and retiring to meet the mother and her daughters, who proceeded similarly. English variants are given in “The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland,” collected by Alice Bertha Gomme, London, 1898, ii. 282-286.